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ABSTRACT

This research reports the development of a semantic differential for rating nonverbal style of expressiveness in a population of expectant mothers. Mothers' nonverbal features (facial expression, gestures, voice quality) were emphasized as uniquely valid indices of emotional attitudes towards parenthood and as the principal forms of interpersonal stimulation to which infants would be exposed. In the final trimester of pregnancy, 46 primiparous mothers, representing a range of ages and ethnic and social class backgrounds, were interviewed on videotape, discussing childhood, marital adjustment, and expectations about parenthood. Interview selections were then presented to judges under three stimulus conditions: total videotape, videotrack, or audiotrack. Each mother's expressive style was rated on 12 bipolar adjective scales pertaining to affective tone, energy level, and involvement. Studies demonstrated the reliability of this instrument and procedure as well as the usefulness of nonverbal measures in descriptive and predictive analyses. (Author/RH)

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ABSTRACT

NONVERBAL STYLE OF EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION: PREDICTION OF PARENTING BEHAVIOR

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This research reports the development of a semantic differential for rating nonverbal style of expressiveness in a population of expectant mothers. Nonverbal features were emphasized as uniquely valid indices of emotional attitudes towards parenthood and as the principal forms of interpersonal stimulation to which infants would be exposed.

In the final trimester of pregnancy, forty-six primiparous mothers, representing a range of age, ethnic, and social class backgrounds, were interviewed on videotape, discussing childhood, marital adjustment, and expectations about parenthood. Interview selections were then presented to judges under three stimulus conditions: Total videotape, Videotrack, or Audiotrack. Each mother's expressive style was rated on twelve bi-polar adjective scales pertaining to affective tone, energy level, and involvement. Studies demonstrated the reliability of this instrument and procedure and the usefulness of nonverbal measures in descriptive and predictive analyses.

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This research reports the development of a semantic differential rating scale for judging nonverbal style of emotional expressiveness in a population of expectant mothers. Nonverbal features of self-presentation (facial expression, gestures, voice quality) were conceptualized as stabilized patterns of behavior which expressed individual differences in activity and intensity and which coded emotional information. Thus, it was expected that valid and reliable assessments of stylistic parameters could be achieved.

Analysis of nonverbal styles of emotional expression in a population of expectant mothers was of interest for two reasons. Research in the communication of emotion has suggested that nonverbal cues can provide "leakage" of information which the individual may be unable or unwilling to verbalize (Ekman and Friesen, 1975). Second, description of the sights and sounds emitted by the expectant mother warrant study as the primary interpersonal stimuli to which preverbal infants will be exposed.

Subjects were forty-six primiparous mothers in a defined geographical area of Los Angeles who volunteered for participation through the UCLA Ob-Gyn Clinic, Lamaze classes, or private pediatricians. These

women represented a range of age, ethnic, and social class backgrounds, though the majority of the sample consisted of white, middle-class women in their late twenties.

During the final trimester of pregnancy, each mother participated in a standardized videotaped interview (Shereshefsky and Yarrow, 1973) with a clinical social worker, discussing childhood experiences, current marital adjustment, and expectations about parenthood. Individual differences in expressive style were rated on the basis of selected samples of this prenatal interview.

The mother's style of expressiveness was rated by pairs of judges, using twelve bi-polar adjective scales of a four-point semantic differential format (Figure 1). Scales reflected three dimensions of style: affective tone (e.g., adjectives Warm--Cold); energy and pacing (Active--Passive, Strong--Weak, Fast--Slow); and involvement (Detached--Involved). To further differentiate the components of the mother's communication, interview selections were presented to different rater pairs under three stimulus conditions: TOTAL videotape (standard video and audio cues); VIDEO (videotrack without sound); and AUDIO (audiotrack without picture). Instructional manuals were written which defined the uniform set of adjective scales in terms appropriate to each stimulus mode.

Generalizability studies were conducted within each of the three stimulus conditions (Cronbach, Gleser, Nanda, and Rajaratnam, 1972). As estimates of reliability, coefficients of generalizability assessed the measurement error involved in rating expressive styles in different communication modes. Results indicated that reliable style ratings could be achieved in each modality. The highest generalizability coefficients

were obtained in the VIDEO condition, suggesting that style expression scales were most appropriate for rating nonverbal behavior from a visual stimulus without sound.

Secondly, a series of factor-analytic investigations was conducted to reduce the adjective scales to more basic dimensions of expressive style. Exploratory factor analyses recurrently identified two factors for each condition, which were interpreted as Positivity (warmth, optimism, and freedom from tension) and Energy-Force (strength, intensity, and tempo). Though conceptually similar, loadings for these factors differed across stimulus modes (Figure 2). Therefore, individual scales were summed for each factor within each condition. Thus, each mother was assigned six expressive style scores, representing Positivity and Energy-Force measures derived from TOTAL, VIDEO, and AUDIO modes. Factor scores across conditions were not significantly correlated (Table 1).

Relationships between expressive style features and other measures of maternal behavior were then examined to determine the validity and possible utility of the nonverbal indices. As evidence of concurrent validity, expressive style scores were related to a series of end-of-pregnancy clinical ratings made partly on the basis of the same videotaped interview from which style expression had been scored. A team of experienced clinicians (blind to pre-birth maternal style scores) judged each mother on various dimensions of psychological functioning and specific adaptation to pregnancy. Reliability and factor-analytic investigations of these end-of-pregnancy ratings are reported elsewhere (Heinicke, 1980).

Correlations with these clinical data were impressive (see Table 2).

The mother's stylistic Positivity was related to measures of optimal pregnancy adaptation, low anxiety, and the capacity to visualize self as mother. Notably, style ratings from the nonverbal VIDEO condition generated the highest number and magnitude of correlations. Thus, judges' observations of visual features of self-presentation, independent of spoken content, were significantly related to clinical appraisals of personality functioning and pregnancy adaptation.

Ratings of style expression were also correlated with observed maternal behaviors towards the infant. One- to two-hour observations by trained clinicians were made during monthly home visits during the first six months of the post-birth period. Assessments of caretaker behaviors included chronological ratings of activity and global, qualitative categorizations by the observer. A sample home rating form is presented in Figure 3. Rating procedures and reliability data are reported in a separate manuscript (Heinicke, 1980). The methodology used was based on earlier investigations presented by Yarrow, Rubenstein, and Pedersen (1975).

Continuities between prenatal ratings of style of emotional expressiveness and measures of parental functioning were illustrated (see Tables 2 and 3). Mothers rated high in stylistic Positivity later demonstrated lower levels of tension, more affectionate gestures and verbalizations, and greater responsiveness to infant needs in the first six months. Stylistic Energy-Force features were related to more behaviorally-oriented aspects of interaction and stimulation. Interestingly, adjective ratings based exclusively on content-free observations (VIDEO condition) showed the most impressive correlations with measures of

post-birth parent functioning.

Relationships between prenatal maternal style factors and ratings of infant functioning were also examined, based on ratings from the same monthly home observations and Bayley testing in the laboratory at the six-month interval (Tables 3 and 4). Maternal Positivity scores were correlated with the infant's alertness, smiling, and social responsiveness to persons at three and six months. Pre-birth assessments of maternal Energy-Force also generated associations with infant characteristics, particularly in areas of movement, alertness, and responsiveness to animate and inanimate environments. The mother's Positivity, scored on the basis of content-free visual cues, was significantly correlated with Bayley indices of the infant's mental and motor development.

Thus, a central outcome of this study was the identification of prenatal features of Positivity which related to maternal affection, tension, and responsiveness towards the infant in postnatal periods. A second important finding was the superior power of content-free, stylistic cues to express these qualities of warmth and optimism.

In this research it was possible to develop an assessment procedure for rating individual style of emotional expression under various informational conditions. Plausibly, both substantive and content-independent features were reliably rated from standard videotapes which presented verbal and nonverbal data. Where communication channels were presented independently, the affective tone of a message was conveyed most effectively along visual lines without distractions from the presence of other information. Qualities of pace and energy level were more assessable from aural cues or from a total stimulus presentation.

The twelve expressive style ratings conformed to a two-part configuration. Positivity and Energy-Force seemed to distinguish emotional and rational-behavioral aspects of functioning. These axes also appeared to offer nonverbal corollaries to Clarke-Stewart's (1973) formulation of dimensions of optimal maternal care, which included components of affectionate acceptance and stimulation of the infant.

Shereshefsky and Yarrow's (1973) focus on ego strength and nurturance as predictor variables of maternal adjustment were relevant to the style factors identified by this study. As discussed, there were significant correlations between style expression variables and clinical ratings. The current research added an observable, behavioral index of these psychological constructs in nonverbal terms. Emotional warmth and nurturance seemed to translate into Positivity, and ego strength appeared measured by both Positivity and Energy-Force scales.

Patterns of correlation between expressive style factors and mothering responses suggested that nonverbal parameters reflect an organized structure of self-presentation cues which were internally consistent and regularly associated with other constellations of behavior. Positivity was especially related to maternal performace in the first months, in areas of affection, level of tension, and responsiveness to child needs. Positivity was intended to measure qualities of warmth and optimism, and these ratings were indeed correlated with clinical assessments of the expectant mother's capacity for nurturance, low anxiety, and enthusiasm. As discussed, indices of similar qualities at later time points were also demonstrated.

The Energy-Force cluster of ratings bore a different relationship to

dependent variables, associating more clearly with measures of amount, pacing, and intensity of parental activity. At the end of pregnancy, Energy-Force was correlated with clinical judgments of positive pregnancy adaptation. In this sense, ratings of stylistic activity appeared sensitive to aspects of physical and emotional coping independently assessed on the basis of substantive features. At one- and three-month intervals particularly, Energy-Force anticipated maternal behavior in a variety of areas and additionally bore correlation to qualitative aspects (mother's smiling, vocal animation, affection) descriptive of the stimulation provided.

Both Positivity and Energy-Force features were predictively related to maternal adjustment and infant adaptation. While the expectant mother who later became affectionate and responsive was perceived prenatally as warm, involved, and optimistic, she also was described as strong, active, and non-restrained. It appeared that mothers who later interacted with their infants in positive ways were not passive, submissive caretakers, but were rather women who accepted themselves (Accepting, Optimistic in style expression); felt capable of giving (Energetic, Warm); and were interested in becoming interpersonally engaged (Active, Involved). Such mothers showed a more generalized self-assurance which importantly included but was not exclusively defined by identification with traditional female role prescriptions.

Another set of findings concerned the relationships between maternal style variables and infant behaviors. Maternal Positivity correlated with the child's alertness, interest in the inanimate environment, and social responsiveness. Energy-Force was associated with the amount of

movement, alertness, and generalized environmental responsiveness. Yarrow et al. (1975) have suggested that the positive affect and involvement of the mother maintain the infant in an arousal state where rewarding and educative experiences become possible, explaining correspondences with greater responsiveness and environmental exploration in the child. The present data would be compatible with this formulation. Alternatively, through imitation, the child may learn the stylistic features modeled by his mother and enact similar patterns in his own responses.

One important facet of this research was the behavioral detailing of what a mother was doing, both in prenatal times (videotaped stimuli) and post-birth periods (naturalistic home observations). Inspection of separated channels of information transmisssion highlighted the messages that would be conveyed to the non-verbal infant. Intercorrelations between style ratings for the same individual across stimulus conditions revealed that mothers were perceived differently according to which stimulus cues were available. Thus, independent channel analysis illustrated discrepancies within communications which might not have been assessable from a total stimulus presentation. Different predictive validities between style ratings and criterion maternal and infant variables demonstrated that even though a mother may verbally express certain attitudes, more valid and potent communications may be provided along facial, gestural, or movement channels.

In summary, continuities between pre- and post-natal maternal functioning were illustrated. A research instrument and experimental procedure were developed for rating individual differences in style of emotional expressiveness. Nonverbal parameters were significantly correlated with parent and infant behaviors, especially when assessed from a

content-edited videotape. The small sample size and correlational methodology naturally limit generalizations from these results, but the reported associations raise many intriguing questions for future investigations. This study did suggest the potential fruitfulness of incorporating assessments of nonverbal cues in descriptive and predictive analyses of personality and behavior.

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FIGURE 1:

ADJECTIVE RATING INSTRUCTIONS

You are about to view selections from videotapes of expectant mothers talking with an interviewer. We are interested in describing the overall style of the person you will see.

You will be asked to watch and listen closely for five minutes and then to rate each person on the descriptive terms on your sheet. Refer to your manual for definitions. The adjectives may not always seem to apply, but you will probably feel more one way than the other. So, for each pair, put a check mark closest to the adjective which seems best, using the full range of the four-point scale. Make marks between the colons. For example, for the adjective pair "WARM -- COLD":

WARM .....:.....:.....✓.....:..... COLD

Please try to rate as accurately as possible, and judge on the basis of what you have just seen and heard. You will view for five minutes and then make ratings. The same tape segments will then be replayed so you can review and confirm your judgments. If inconsistencies or discrepancies are present, weight the nonverbal style cues more heavily than what is said. Emphasize the total feeling each person engenders, weighted in the direction of nonverbal style.

Watch and listen carefully. Thank you very much for your participation.

FIGURE 1:

STYLE OF EXPRESSIVENESS ADJECTIVE RATING FORM

RATER _____ DATE _____ TAPE _____

	VERY	SOME-WHAT	SOME-WHAT	VERY		NOT APPLICABLE
WARM	.....	:	:	:	COLD	_____
DOMINANT	.....	:	:	:	SUBMISSIVE	_____
DEPLETED	.....	:	:	:	ENERGETIC	_____
ANXIOUS	.....	:	:	:	CALM	_____
LOUD	.....	:	:	:	SOFT	_____
DETACHED	.....	:	:	:	INVOLVED	_____
OPTIMISTIC	.....	:	:	:	PESSIMISTIC	_____
STRONG	.....	:	:	:	WEAK	_____
SLOW	.....	:	:	:	FAST	_____
CRITICAL	.....	:	:	:	ACCEPTING	_____
RESTRAINED	.....	:	:	:	EXPRESSIVE	_____
ACTIVE	.....	:	:	:	PASSIVE	_____

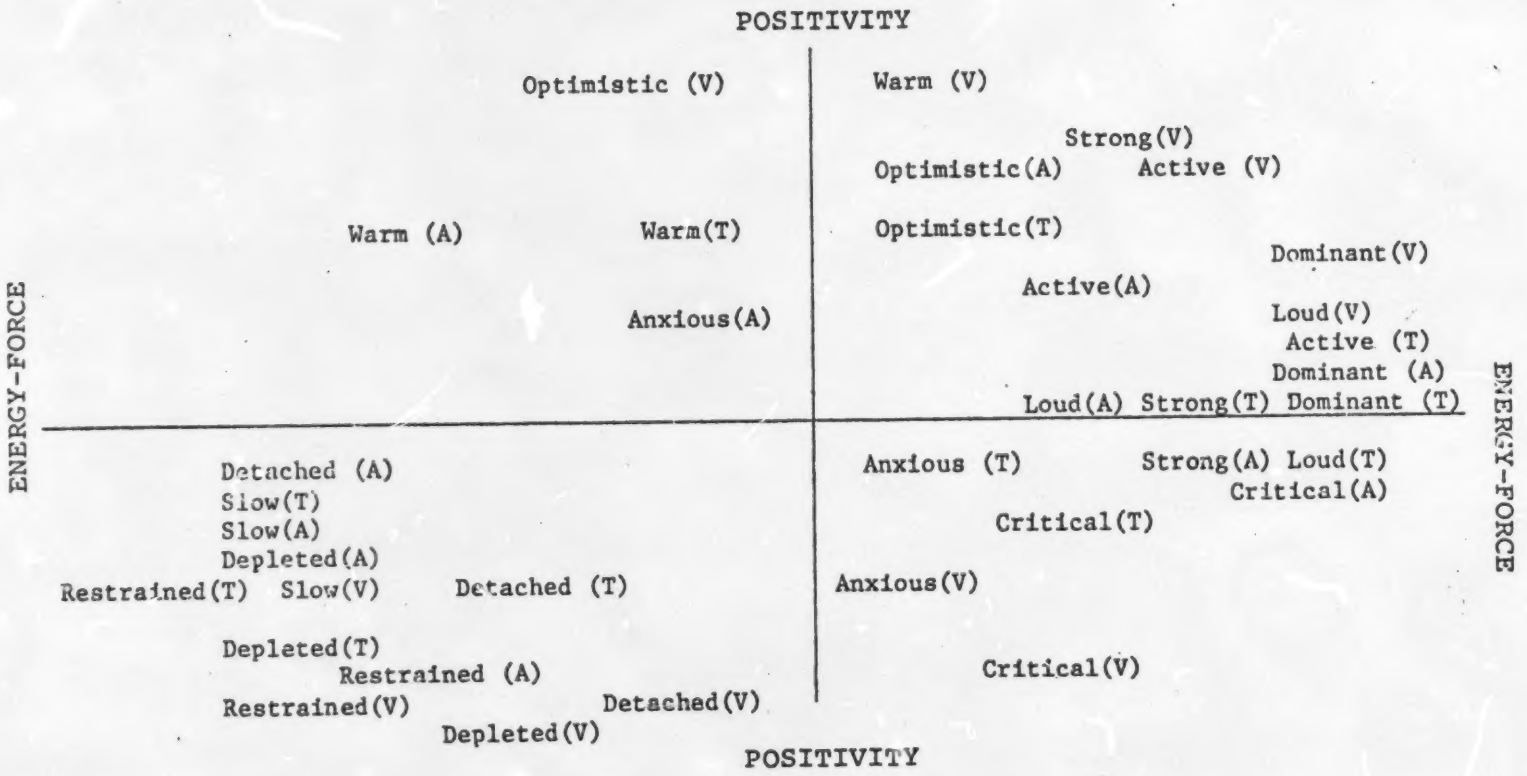

FIGURE 2 : GRAPHIC PLOT: FACTOR STRUCTURE OF ADJECTIVES ACROSS CONDITIONS

FIGURE 3

_____
Family Name

1 - 6 MONTHS PARENT-INFANT

AND

INFANT RATING FORM*

RATER:_____ DATE:_____

INFANT RATINGS (1-5)

1. Alertness ____
2. Social Interest and Responsiveness to Mother ____
3. Responsiveness to the Inanimate Environment ____
4. Irritability ____
5. Characteristic Intensity of Baby's Cry ____
6. Soothability ____
7. Variations of Baby Vocalization ____
8. Pleasure in Physical Contact ____
9. Motor Activity ____
10. Manipulates Object ____
11. Extent of Smiling ____
12. Extent of Resisting the Parent ____

PARENT-INFANT RATINGS (1-5)

1. Physical Involvement and Closeness ____
2. Intensity of Positive Emotional Expression ____
3. Intensity of Negative Emotional Expression ____
4. Animation of Mother's Voice ____
5. Characteristic Intensity of Mother's Voice ____

FIGURE 3 continued

6. Sensitivity and Responiveness to Positive Social Behavior ____

7. Appropriateness of Mother's Behavior Regarding Feeding ____

8. Appropriateness of Mother's Behavior to Baby's Needs and Rhythms ____

9. Parental Readiness to Respond to Distress ____

10. Physical Tension ____

11. Motor Activity Level ____

12. Extent of Observer Influence on the Mother ____

13. Cognitive Stimulation ____

14. Cognitive Stimulation ____

15. Social Stimulation ____

16. Stimulates Posture and Locomotion Development ____

17. Rocking - Cuddling ____

18. Vigorous - Tactile - Kinesthetic Stimulation ____

19. Play ____

20. Restrict ____

21. Qual. & Quant. of Affection ____

*See Manual for Instructions

Table 1

CORRELATIONS BETWEEN FACTOR SCORES WITHIN AND ACROSS STIMULUS CONDITIONS

(Pearson Correlation Coefficient)

	P (TOTAL)	P (VIDEO)	P (AUDIO)	E-F (TOTAL)	E-F (VIDEO)	E-F (AUDIO)
POSITIVITY (TOTAL)	1.0000	.3415	.3074	-.1378	-.1458	-.0597
POSITIVITY (VIDEO)	.3415	1.0000	.3551	.1698	.5329	.1602
POSITIVITY (AUDIO)	.3074	.3551	1.0000	.1025	.2624	.4742
ENERGY-FORCE (TOTAL)	-.1378	.1698	.1025	1.0000	.7131	.7568
ENERGY-FORCE (VIDEO)	-.1458	.5329	.2624	.7131	1.0000	.5351
ENERGY-FORCE (AUDIO)	-.0597	.1602	.4742	.7568	.5351	1.0000

(P = POSITIVITY; E-F = ENERGY-FORCE)

Table 2

CORRELATIONS OF STYLE RATINGS AND MATERNAL BEHAVIORS

(End of Pregnancy, 1 Month, 3 Months)

STYLE RATINGS	END OF PREGNANCY	ONE MONTH	THREE MONTHS
POSITIVITY			
A. Total	.358 Mother Can Express Tenderness, Affection (.04)	-.315 Mother Expresses Positive Feeling (.07)	-.405 Mother Expresses Negative Feeling (.02)
B. Video	.462 Mother Adapts Well, Low Anxiety, Visualizes Self as Mother (.01)		-.468 Mother Responds to Needs, Affectionate (.01)
	.383 Mother Can Express Tenderness, Affection (.03)		-.334 Mother Expresses Negative Feeling (.05)
			.525 Mother is Physically Involved; Plays (.004)
C. Audio	.307 Mother Perceives Husband as Enthusiastic (.07)	.417 Mother Responds to Needs, Relaxed, Affectionate (.02)	-.518 Mother Expresses Negative Feeling (.004)
			.454 Mother is Physically Involved; Plays (.01)

Continued --

Table 2 continued

STYLE RATINGS	END OF PREGNANCY	ONE MONTH	THREE MONTHS
ENERGY-FORCE			
A. Total	.379 Mother Adapts Well, Low Anxiety, Visualizes Self as Mother (.03)	.328 Mother Interacts: Smile, Visual, Vocal (.05) .376 Mother Interacts: Tactile-Kinesthetic (.03)	.406 Mother Interacts: Kinesthetic, Tactile, Visual, Vocal (.02)
B. Video	.428 Mother Adapts Well, Low Anxiety, Visualizes Self as Mother (.02) .311 Mother Perceives Husband as Enthusiastic (.07)	.303 Mother Interacts: Tactile-Kinesthetic (.075)	-.313 Mother Responds to Needs, Affectionate (.07) .380 Mother Has Animated Voice (.03)
C. Audio		.369 Mother Interacts: Tactile-Kinesthetic (.04)	.369 Mother Interacts: Kinesthetic, Tactile, Visual, Vocal (.04) -.441 Mother Expresses Negative Affect (.01)

Table 3

CORRELATIONS OF POSITIVITY AND MATERNAL AND INFANT FACTORS

(3 and 6 Months)

STYLE RATINGS	3-MONTH INFANT FACTORS	6-MONTH MATERNAL FACTORS	6-MONTH INFANT FACTORS
I. POSITIVITY			
A. Total	.359 Infant Alert and Manipulates Objects (.04)	.368 Mother Shows Physical Tension (.04) -.404 Mother Shows Positive Affect (.03)	-.301 Infant Cries (.08)
B. Video	.293 Infant Alert and Manipulates Objects (.08)	-.434 Mother Shows Physical Tension (.02)	.302 Infant Moves and Manipulates (.08)
	.411 Infant Makes Vegetative Noises and Visually Attentive to Inanimate (.02)	.352 Mother Stimulates Cognitive Experience (.05)	.425 Infant Alert (.02)
	.298 Intermediate Distance of Caretaker and Alert (.08)	.545 Mother Responsive to Infant Needs (.003)	.524 Infant Smiles, Socially Responsive (.004)

Continued --

Table 3 continued

STYLE RATINGS	3-MONTH INFANT FACTORS	6-MONTH MATERNAL FACTORS	6-MONTH INFANT FACTORS
	-.338 Infant Responsive to Inanimate; Caretaker Out of Room (.05)	.284 Mother Stimulates Tactilely, Kinesthetically (.09)	
C. Audio		-.333 Mother Shows Positive Affect (.06) .285 Mother Stimulates Tactilely, Kinesthetically (.09) -.402 Mutual Looking and Low Activity Level (.03)	

Table 3 continued

STYLE RATINGS	3-MONTH INFANT FACTORS	6-MONTH MATERNAL FACTORS	6-MONTH INFANT FACTORS
II. ENERGY-FORCE			
A. Total	.303 Infant Smiles, Social Interest (.08)	.407 Mother Looks, Vocalizes, Caretakes (.02)	.378 Infant Moves (.03)
			.409 Infant Alert; Responds to Inanimate (.02)
	.341 Infant Moves (.05)	.270 Mother Stimulates Tactiley, Kinesthetically (.10)	.369 Infant Smiles, Socially Responsive (.04)
			-.452 Intermediate Proximity; Varied Vocalization (.01)
B. Video	.272 Intermediate Distance of Caretaker and Alert (.10)	.271 Mother Stimulates Cognitive Experience (.10)	.402 Infant Moves (.03)
	.367 Infant Moves (.04)		.420 Infant Alert; Responds to Inanimate (.02)
	-.355 Infant Responsive to Inanimate; Caretaker Out of Room (.04)	.339 Mother Responsive to Infant Needs (.05)	.390 Infant Smiles, Socially Responsive (.03)
			-.437 Intermediate Proximity, Varied Vocalization (.02)

Table 3 continued

STYLE RATINGS	3-MONTH INFANT FACTORS	6-MONTH MATERNAL FACTORS	6-MONTH INFANT FACTORS
C. Audio	.274 Infant Smiles, Shows Social Interest (.10)	-.308 Mutual Looking and Low Activity Level (.07)	.386 Infant Moves (.03) .304 Infant Alert, Responds to Inanimate (.08) .350 Infant Smiles, Socially Responsive (.05)

Table 4

CORRELATIONS OF STYLE RATINGS, MATERNAL IQ, AND INFANT BAYLEY SCALES

(6 Months)

STYLE RATINGS	MATERNAL IQ	INFANT D.Q. (Bayley-6 Months)
I. POSITIVITY		
A. Total	.520 Mother's Performance IQ (.003)	.315 Infant Mental Index (.05)
B. Video	.661 Mother's Performance IQ (.001)	.362 Infant Mental Index (.03)
	.414 Mother's Total IQ (.02)	.393 Infant Motor Index (.02)
C. Audio	.251 Mother's Total IQ (.10)	
II. ENERGY-FORCE		
A. Total		
B. Video	.310 Mother's Verbal IQ (.06)	.292 Infant Mental Index (.07)
	.258 Mother's Performance IQ (.10)	
	.338 Mother's Total IQ (.05)	
C. Audio	.464 Mother's Verbal IQ (.01)	
	.420 Mother's Total IQ (.02)	